



WIREFGUARD

FAST, MODERN, SECURE VPN TUNNEL

Presented by Jason A. Donenfeld

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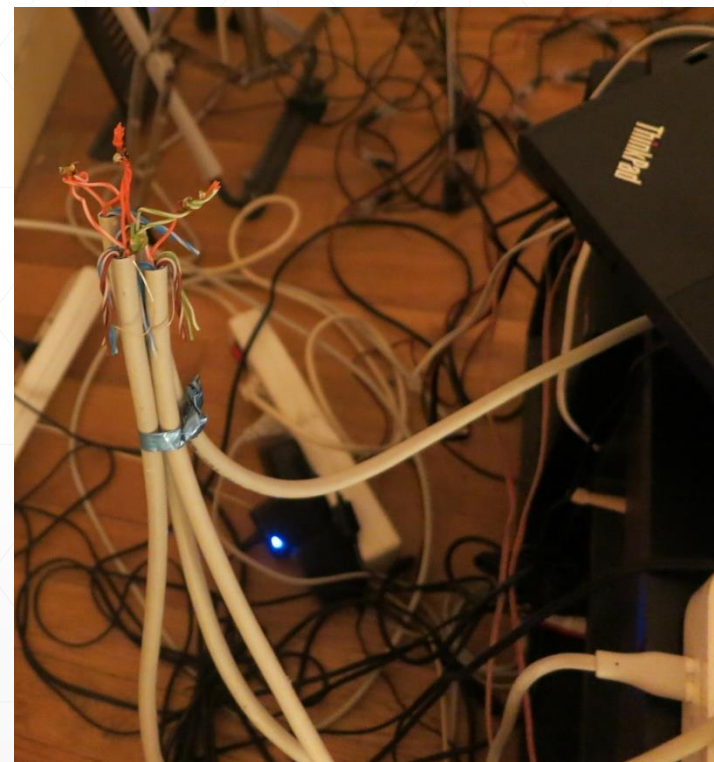
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Who Am I?

- Jason Donenfeld, also known as **zx2c4**, no academic affiliation.
- Background in exploitation, kernel vulnerabilities, crypto vulnerabilities, though quite a bit of development experience too.
- Motivated to make a VPN that avoids the problems in both crypto and implementation that I've found in numerous other projects.

What is WireGuard?

- Layer 3 secure network tunnel for IPv4 and IPv6.
 - Opinionated.
- Lives in the Linux kernel, but cross platform implementations are in the works.
- UDP-based. Punches through firewalls.
- Modern conservative cryptographic principles.
- Emphasis on simplicity and auditability.
- Authentication model similar to SSH's `authenticated_keys`.
- Replacement for OpenVPN and IPsec.



Easily Auditable

OpenVPN	Linux XFRM	StrongSwan	SoftEther	WireGuard
<u>116,730</u> LoC Plus OpenSSL!	<u>13,898</u> LoC Plus StrongSwan!	<u>405,894</u> LoC Plus XFRM!	<u>329,853</u> LoC	<u>3,904</u> LoC

Less is more.

Easily Auditable

IPsec
(XFRM+StrongSwan)
419,792 LoC

SoftEther
329,853 LoC

OpenVPN
116,730
LoC

WireGuard
3,904 LoC



Simplicity of Interface

- WireGuard presents a normal network interface:

```
# ip link add wg0 type wireguard
# ip address add 192.168.3.2/24 dev wg0
# ip route add default via wg0
# ifconfig wg0 ...
# iptables -A INPUT -i wg0 ...
```

/etc/hosts.{allow,deny}, bind(), ...

- Everything that ordinarily builds on top of network interfaces – like eth0 or wlan0 – can build on top of wg0.

Blasphemy!

- WireGuard is blasphemous!
- We break several layering assumptions of 90s networking technologies like IPsec.
 - IPsec involves a “transform table” for outgoing packets, which is managed by a user space daemon, which does key exchange and updates the transform table.
- With WireGuard, we start from a very basic building block – the network interface – and build up from there.
- Lacks the academically pristine layering, but through clever organization we arrive at something more coherent.

Simplicity of Interface

- The interface *appears* stateless to the system administrator.
- Add an interface – wg0, wg1, wg2, ... – configure its peers, and immediately packets can be sent.
- Endpoints roam, like in mosh.
- Identities are just the static public keys, just like SSH.
- Everything else, like session state, connections, and so forth, is invisible to admin.

Cryptokey Routing

- **The fundamental concept of any VPN is an association between public keys of peers and the IP addresses that those peers are allowed to use.**
- A WireGuard interface has:
 - A private key
 - A listening UDP port
 - A list of peers
- A peer:
 - Is identified by its public key
 - Has a list of associated tunnel IPs
 - Optionally has an endpoint IP and port

Cryptokey Routing

PUBLIC KEY :: IP ADDRESS

Cryptokey Routing

Userspace:
send(packet)



Linux kernel:
Ordinary routing table
→ wg0



WireGuard:
Destination IP address
→ which *peer*



WireGuard:
encrypt(packet)
send(encrypted)
→ *peer's* endpoint

WireGuard:
recv(encrypted)



WireGuard:
decrypt(packet)
→ which *peer*



WireGuard:
Source IP address
↔ *peer's* allowed
IPs



Linux:
Hand packet to
networking stack

Cryptokey Routing

- Makes system administration very simple.
- If it comes from interface `wg0` and is from Yoshi's tunnel IP address of `192.168.5.17`, then the packet *definitely came from Yoshi*.
- The iptables rules are plain and clear.



Simplicity of Interface

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Demo

Simple Composable Tools

- Since wg (8) is a very simple tool, that works with ip (8), other more complicated tools can be built on top.
- Integration into various network managers:
 - ifupdown
 - OpenWRT/LEDE
 - OpenRC netifrc
 - NixOS
 - systemd-networkd (WIP)
 - NetworkManager (WIP)

Simple Composable Tools: wg-quick

- Simple shell script
- ```
wg-quick up vpn0
wg-quick down vpn0
```
- `/etc/wireguard/vpn0.conf:`

```
[Interface]
Address = 10.200.100.2
PostUp = echo nameserver 10.200.100.1 | resolvconf -a %i -m 0 -x
PostDown = resolvconf -d %i
PrivateKey = uDmW0qECQZWPv4K83yg26b3L4r93HvLRca1997IGlEE=
```

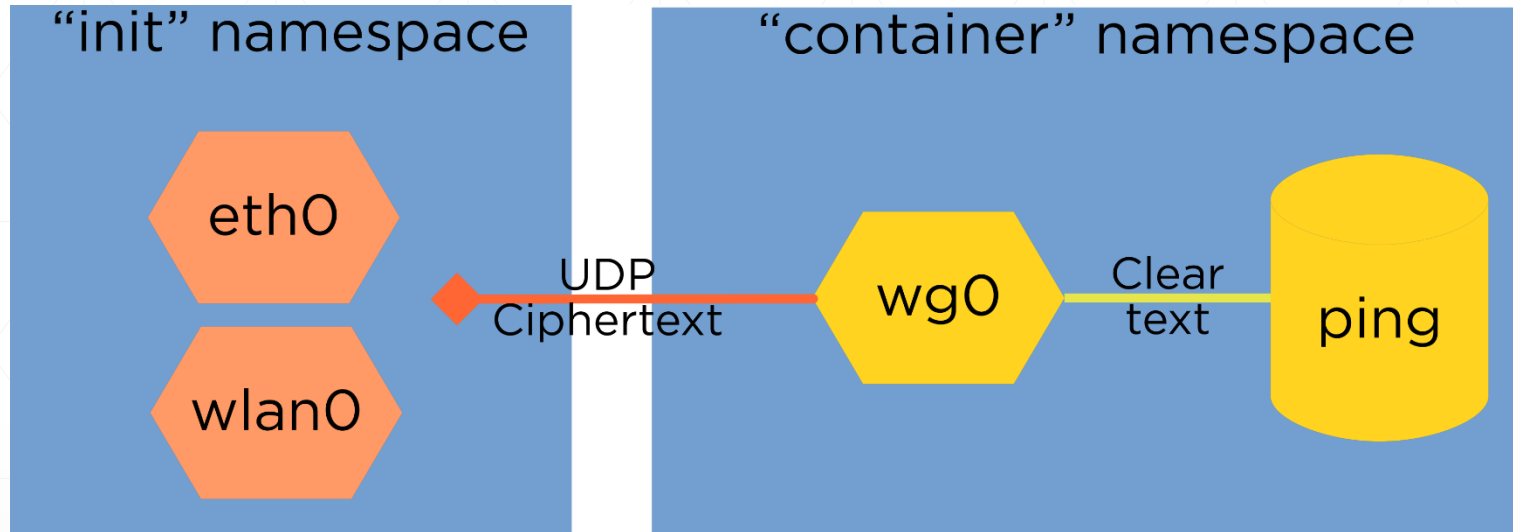
```
[Peer]
PublicKey = +LRS630XvyCoVDs1zmWR0/6gVkfQ/pTKEZvZ+Ceh01E=
AllowedIPs = 0.0.0.0/0
Endpoint = demo.wireguard.io:51820
```



# Network Namespace Tricks

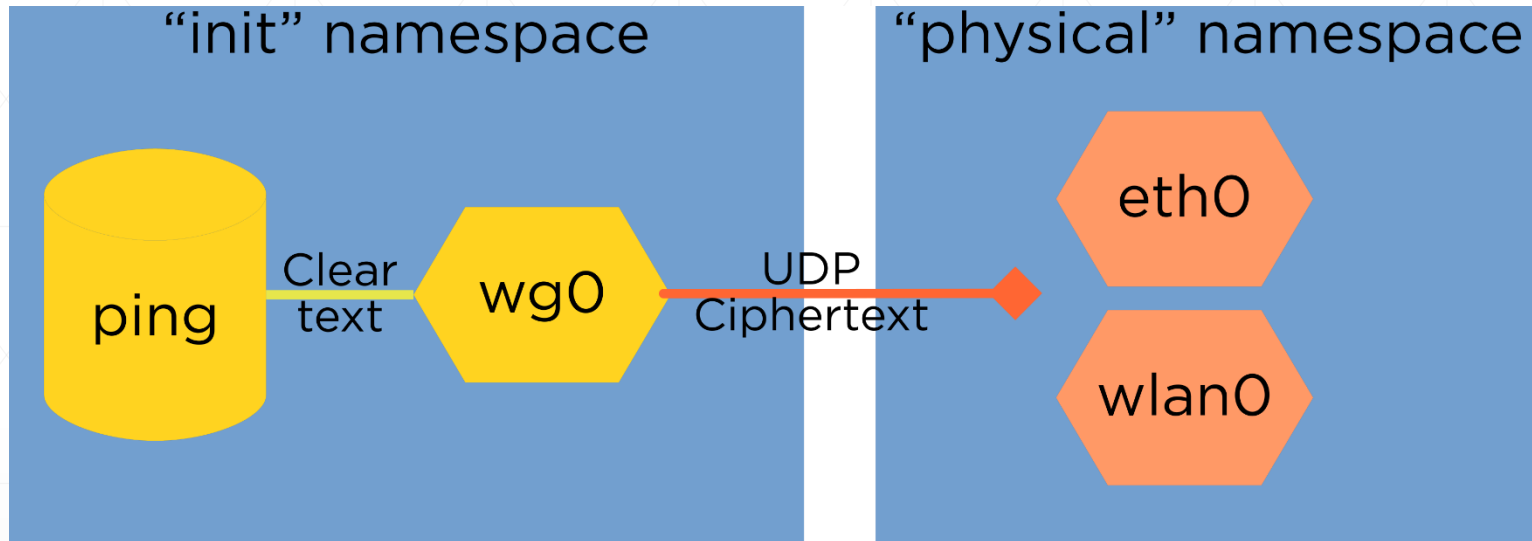
- The WireGuard interface can live in one namespace, and the physical interface can live in another.
- Only let a Docker container connect via WireGuard.
- Only let your DHCP client touch physical interfaces, and only let your web browser see WireGuard interfaces.
- Nice alternative to routing table hacks.

# Namespaces: Containers



```
ip addr
1: lo: <LOOPBACK,UP,LOWER_UP>
 inet 127.0.0.1/8 scope host lo
17: wg0: <NOARP,UP,LOWER_UP>
 inet 192.168.4.33/32 scope global wg0
```

# Namespaces: Personal VPN



```
ip addr
1: lo: <LOOPBACK,UP,LOWER_UP>
 inet 127.0.0.1/8 scope host lo
17: wg0: <NOARP,UP,LOWER_UP>
 inet 192.168.4.33/32 scope global wg0
```

# Timers: A Stateless Interface for a Stateful Protocol

- As mentioned prior, WireGuard appears “stateless” to user space; you set up your peers, and then it *just works*.
- A series of timers manages session state internally, invisible to the user.
- Every transition of the state machine has been accounted for, so there are no undefined states or transitions.
- Event based.

# Timers

User space sends packet.

- If no session has been established for 120 seconds, send handshake initiation.

No handshake response after 5 seconds.

- Resend handshake initiation.

Successful authentication of incoming packet.

- Send an encrypted empty packet after 10 seconds, if we don't have anything else to send during that time.

No successfully authenticated incoming packets after 15 seconds.

- Send handshake initiation.

# Static Allocations, Guarded State, and Fixed Length Headers

- All state required for WireGuard to work is allocated during config.
- No memory is dynamically allocated in response to received packets.
  - Eliminates entire classes of vulnerabilities.
- All packet headers have fixed width fields, so no parsing is necessary.
  - Eliminates *another* entire class of vulnerabilities.
- No state is modified in response to unauthenticated packets.
  - Eliminates *yet another* entire class of vulnerabilities.

# Stealth

- Some aspects of WireGuard grew out of an earlier kernel rootkit project.
- Should not respond to any unauthenticated packets.
- Hinder scanners and service discovery.
- Service only responds to packets with correct crypto.
- Not chatty at all.
  - When there's no data to be exchanged, both peers become silent.



# Crypto

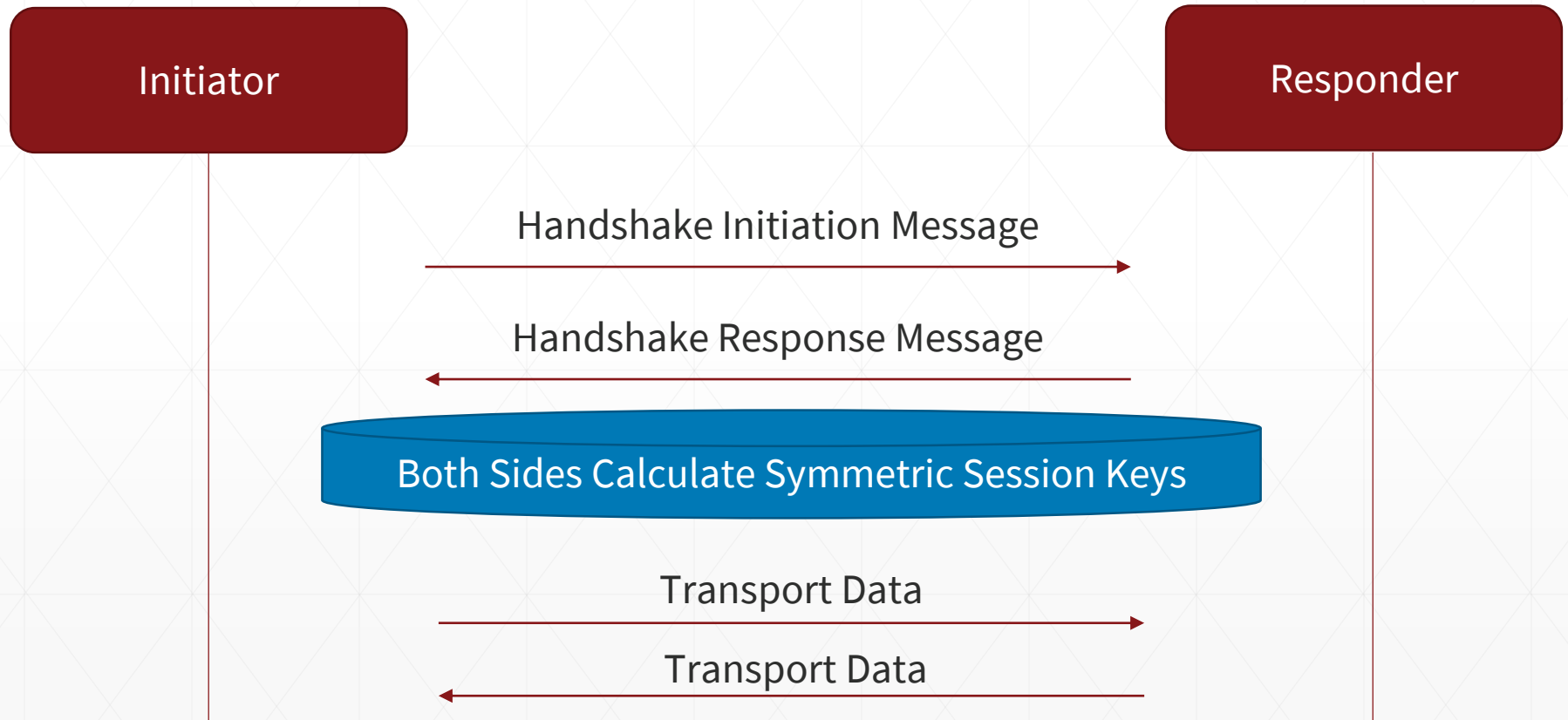
- We make use of Trevor Perrin's Noise Protocol Framework – [noiseprotocol.org](https://noiseprotocol.org)
  - Developed with much feedback from the WireGuard development.
  - Custom written very specific implementation of NoiseIK for the kernel.
- The usual list of modern desirable properties you'd want from an authenticated key exchange
- Modern primitives: Curve25519, Blake2s, ChaCha20, Poly1305, SipHash2-4
- Lack of cipher agility!



# Crypto

- Key secrecy
  - Perfect forward secrecy – new key every 2 minutes
- Key agreement
  - Authenticity
  - KCI-resistance
- Identity hiding
- Replay-attack prevention, while allowing for network packet reordering
- Working on formal verification via Tamarin with Kevin Milner

# The Key Exchange



# The Key Exchange

- In order for two peers to exchange data, they must first derive ephemeral symmetric crypto session keys from their static public keys.
- The key exchange designed to keep our principles static allocations, guarded state, fixed length headers, and stealthiness.
- Either side can reinitiate the handshake to derive new session keys.
  - So initiator and responder can “swap” roles.
- Invalid handshake messages are ignored, maintaining stealth.

# The Key Exchange: NoiseK

- One peer is the initiator; the other is the responder.
- Each peer has their static identity – their long term *static keypair*.
- For each new handshake, each peer generates an *ephemeral keypair*.
- The security properties we want are achieved by computing `ECDH()` on the combinations of two ephemeral keypairs and two static keypairs.
- Session keys = `Noise(`
  - `ECDH(ephemeral, static),`
  - `ECDH(static, ephemeral),`
  - `ECDH(ephemeral, ephemeral),`
  - `ECDH(static, static)``)`
- The first three `ECDH()` make up the “triple DH”, and the last one allows for authentication in the first message, for 1-RTT.

# The Key Exchange: NoiseIK – Initiator → Responder

- The initiator begins by knowing the long term static public key of the responder.
- The initiator sends to the responder:
  - A cleartext ephemeral public key.
  - The initiator's public key, authenticated-encrypted using a key that is an (indirect) result of:  
$$\text{ECDH}(E_i, S_r) == \text{ECDH}(S_r, E_i)$$
    - After decrypting this, the responder knows the initiator's public key.
    - Only the responder can decrypt this, because it requires control of the responder's static private key.
  - A monotonically increasing counter (usually just a timestamp in TAI64N) that is authenticated-encrypted using a key that is an (indirect) result of the above calculation as well as:  
$$\text{ECDH}(S_i, S_r) == \text{ECDH}(S_r, S_i)$$
    - This counter prevents against replay DoS.
    - Authenticating it verifies the initiator controls its private key.
    - Authentication in the first message – static-static  $\text{ECDH}()$ .

# The Key Exchange: NoiseIK – Responder → Initiator

- The responder at this point has learned the initiator's static public key from the prior first message, as well as the initiator's ephemeral public key.
- The responder sends to the initiator:
  - A cleartext ephemeral public key.
  - An empty buffer, authenticated-encrypted using a key that is an (indirect) result of the calculations in the prior message as well as:

$$\text{ECDH}(E_r, E_i) == \text{ECDH}(E_i, E_r)$$

and

$$\text{ECDH}(E_r, S_i) == \text{ECDH}(S_i, E_r)$$

- Authenticating it verifies the responder controls its private key.

# The Key Exchange: Session Derivation

- After the previous two messages (initiator → responder and responder → initiator), both initiator and responder have something bound to these ECDH ( ) calculations:
  - $\text{ECDH}(E_i, S_r) == \text{ECDH}(S_r, E_i)$
  - $\text{ECDH}(S_i, S_r) == \text{ECDH}(S_r, S_i)$
  - $\text{ECDH}(E_i, E_r) == \text{ECDH}(E_r, E_i)$
  - $\text{ECDH}(S_i, E_r) == \text{ECDH}(E_r, S_i)$
- From this they can derive symmetric authenticated-encryption session keys – one for sending and one for receiving.
- When the initiator sends its first data message using these session keys, the responder receives *confirmation* that the initiator has understood its response message, and can then send data to the initiator.

# The Key Exchange

- Just 1-RTT.
- *Extremely* simple to implement in practice, and doesn't lead to the type of complicated messes we see in OpenSSL and StrongSwan.
- No certificates, X.509, or ASN.1: both sides exchange very short (32 bytes) base64-encoded public keys, just as with SSH.

```
zx2c4@thinkpad WireGuard/src $ cloc noise.c

Language blank comment code

C 87 39 441

```



# Poor-man's PQ Resistance

- Optionally, two peers can have a pre-shared key, which gets “mixed” into the handshake.
- Grover's algorithm – 256-bit symmetric key, brute forced with  $2^{128}$  iterations.
  - This speed-up is *optimal*.
- Pre-shared keys are easy to steal, especially when shared amongst lots of parties.
  - But simply augments the ordinary handshake, not replaces it.
- By the time adversary can decrypt past traffic, hopefully all those PSKs have been forgotten by various hard drives anyway.

# Denial of Service Resistance

- Hashing and symmetric crypto is fast, but pubkey crypto is slow.
- We use Curve25519 for elliptic curve Diffie-Hellman (ECDH), which is one of the fastest curves, but still is slower than the network.
- Overwhelm a machine asking it to compute ECDH ( ).
  - Vulnerability in OpenVPN!
- UDP makes this difficult.
- WireGuard uses “cookies” to solve this.

# Cookies: TCP-like

- Dialog:
  - Initiator: Compute this ECDH ( ).
  - Responder: Your magic word is “Yorkshire pudding”. Ask me again with the magic word.
  - Initiator: My magic word is “Yorkshire pudding”. Compute this ECDH ( ).
- Proves IP ownership, but cannot rate limit IP address without storing state.
  - Violates security design principle, no dynamic allocations!
- Always responds to message.
  - Violates security design principle, stealth!
- Magic word can be intercepted.



# Cookies: DTLS-like and IKEv2-like

- Dialog:
  - Initiator: Compute this ECDH ( ).
  - Responder: Your magic word is “`cbdd7c...bb71d9c0`”. Ask me again with the magic word.
  - Initiator: My magic word is “`cbdd7c...bb71d9c0`”. Compute this ECDH ( ).
- “`cbdd7c...bb71d9c0`” == `MAC(key=responder_secret, initiator_ip_address)`  
Where `responder_secret` changes every few minutes.
- Proves IP ownership without storing state.
- Always responds to message.
  - Violates security design principle, stealth!
- Magic word can be intercepted.
- Initiator can be DoS'd by flooding it with fake magic words.

# Cookies: HIPv2-like and Bitcoin-like

- Dialog:
  - Initiator: Compute this ECDH ( ).
  - Responder: Mine a Bitcoin first, then ask me!
  - Initiator: I toiled away and found a Bitcoin. Compute this ECDH ( ).
- Proof of work.
- Robust for combating DoS if the puzzle is harder than ECDH ( ).
- However, it means that a responder can DoS an initiator, and that initiator and responder cannot symmetrically change roles without incurring CPU overhead.
  - Imagine a server having to do proofs of work for each of its clients.

# Cookies: The WireGuard Variant

- Each handshake message (initiation and response) has two macs: mac1 and mac2.
- mac1 is calculated as:  
HASH(responder\_public\_key || handshake\_message)
  - If this mac is invalid or missing, the message will be ignored.
  - Ensures that initiator must know the identity key of the responder in order to elicit a response.
    - Ensures stealthiness – security design principle.
  - MAC(psk, responder\_public\_key || handshake\_message)  
when PSK is in use
- If the responder is not under load (not under DoS attack), it proceeds normally.
- If the responder is under load (experiencing a DoS attack), ...

# Cookies: The WireGuard Variant

- If the responder is under load (experiencing a DoS attack), it replies with a cookie computed as:  
XAEAD(  
    key=HASH(responder\_public\_key),  
    additional\_data=handshake\_message,  
    MAC(key=responder\_secret, initiator\_ip\_address)  
)
  - key=MAC(psk, responder\_public\_key) when PSK is in use
- mac2 is then calculated as:  
MAC(key=cookie, handshake\_message)
  - If it's valid, the message is processed even under load.

# Cookies: The WireGuard Variant

- Once IP address is attributed, ordinary token bucket rate limiting can be applied.
- Maintains stealthiness.
- Cookies cannot be intercepted by somebody who couldn't already initiate the same exchange.
- Initiator cannot be DoS'd, since the encrypted cookie uses the original handshake message as the “additional data” parameter.
  - An attacker would have to already have a MITM position, which would make DoS achievable by other means, anyway.

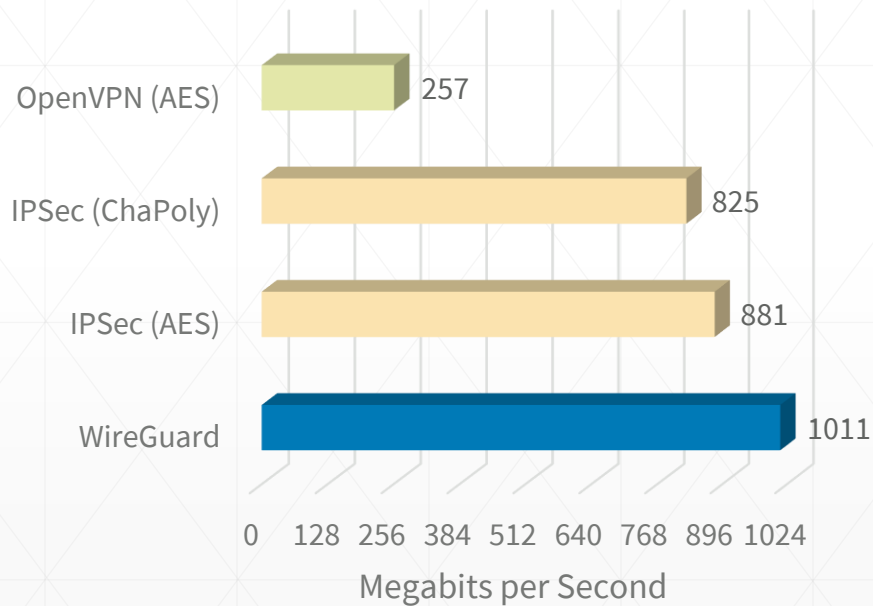


# Performance

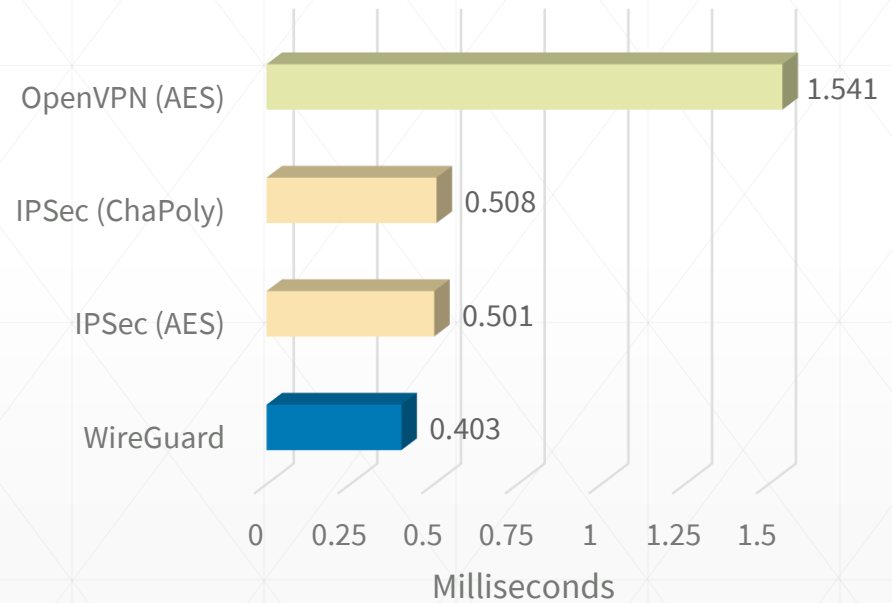
- Being in kernel space means that it is *fast* and low latency.
  - No need to copy packets twice between user space and kernel space.
- ChaCha20Poly1305 is extremely fast on nearly all hardware, and safe.
  - AES-NI is fast too, obviously, but as Intel and ARM vector instructions become wider and wider, ChaCha is handily able to compete with AES-NI, and even perform better in some cases.
  - AES is exceedingly difficult to implement performantly and safely (no cache-timing attacks) without specialized hardware.
  - ChaCha20 can be implemented efficiently on nearly all general purpose processors.
- Simple design of WireGuard means less overhead, and thus better performance.
  - Less code → Faster program? Not always, but in this case, certainly.

# Performance: Measurements

## Bandwidth



## Ping Time



# Simple, Fast, and Secure

- **Less than 4,000 lines of code.**
- Easily implemented with basic data structures.
- Design of WireGuard lends itself to coding patterns that are secure in practice.
- Minimal state kept, no dynamic allocations.
- Stealthy and minimal attack surface.
- Handshake based on NoiseIK
- Fundamental property of a secure tunnel: association between a peer and a peer's IPs.
- Extremely performant – best in class.
- Simple standard interface via an ordinary network device.
- Opinionated.

# www.wireguard.io

## WireGuard

- Paper published in NDSS 2017, available at: [wireguard.io/papers/wireguard.pdf](http://wireguard.io/papers/wireguard.pdf)
- Real production code, not just an “academic” proof of concept
- Open source
- \$ git clone <https://git.zx2c4.com/WireGuard>
- Mailing list: [lists.zx2c4.com/mailman/listinfo/wireguard](http://lists.zx2c4.com/mailman/listinfo/wireguard)  
[wireguard@lists.zx2c4.com](mailto:wireguard@lists.zx2c4.com)

## Jason Donenfeld

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